The Double-Edged Sword: Fantasy Films' Elements and Ideologies

James M. Elrod

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts in English
in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Indiana University

December 2014

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English.

M.A. Committee

Elaine Roth, Ph.D.
Director

Anne Magnan-Park, Ph.D.

James Collins, Ph.D.

5 December 2014

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Introduction

When audiences engage in popular genre films, they participate not only in fictional stories but also in the films' and the genre's very real and implicit politics. Genre films are highly influential media forms that warrant special critical attention. The fantasy film genre in particular– which has long been dismissed by critics for not resting on the core principles of realism as do the genres of action, melodrama, and comedy – at this junction in history deserves special attention, given its ability to challenge the binary codes that shape human behavior and its corresponding art forms. Katherine Fowkes in her book *The Fantasy Film* argues that all cinema, by its fictional nature, is unrealistic (4); she also implies that fantasy is the genre of leisure or play (172). However, this millennium has seen a spike in popularity and commercial success for the genres of the "overall [fantastical] 'mode' of fiction" (2) such as horror, science fiction, and fantasy. Since especially the latter has the ability to access the subconscious as well as to work on the literal level, one can assume it factors both into the formation and navigation of individual identities as well as into completing quite a bit of sociopolitical work.

There is power in play, and as the fantasy film genre rises in popularity and reaches a greater scope of audiences, its ideologies, particularly those centered in its social politics and portrayals of diverse experiences or lack thereof, must be treated as weightily as the more mimetic genres. The issues of gender, race, class, and LGBT experiences which genre addresses, or fails to address, are rooted in our present reality, even when they are channeled through unrealistic

settings. The focus of this paper is to look at the ways that the fantasy film genre is reflecting current dispositions toward gender portrayals and gender politics in our society, especially in this era of sweeping cultural change.

One must understand that the genre's traditional, pejorative portrayals of feminine gender can be attributed to ideologies that find their source deep in culture rather than in the overt agenda of the film industry itself. As Siegfried Kracauer contends in his book *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film,* "What films reflect are not so much explicit credos as psychological dispositions – those deep layers of collective mentality which extend more or less below the dimension of consciousness" where "inner life manifests itself in various elements and conglomerations of external life, especially in those almost imperceptible surface data which form an essential part of screen treatment" (6-7). He goes on to argue that "in recording the visible world – whether current reality or an imaginary universe – films therefore provide clues to hidden mental processes" (7). Analyzing these clues, in this case from the "imaginary universe" created by fantasy films, can begin to expose and counter problematic ideologies, such as those revolving around gender issues in the genre.

Since the film industry directly accesses the attention of the masses that flock to see its films, one also cannot deny that the fantasy film genre's popularity reveals itself as being a double-edged sword, of sorts; more than being a surface to reflect general cultural shifts, it is also rendered able to inaugurate new ideologies and to sustain old ones. Therefore, the recently-popular fantasy genre, specifically the rejuvenation of fairy tales in revised forms, has provided a

battleground for shifting notions of gender identity. This paper's goal is to discuss how traditional binary oppositions have been challenged and revised in recent fantasy films while still remaining intact, and, in doing so, to reveal how the binary structure itself has in fact been critiqued in recent iterations of the genre. Films such as *Maleficent*, for example, move the genre toward the threshold of post-binary space where other experiences bordering gender identity, such as LGBT issues, could potentially manifest themselves more explicitly in future genre films. This paper's intention is to show how *Maleficent* has achieved this process and to call for similar fantasy films to follow suit in the future.

The rising popularity of the fantastical film genres can be attributed to the advent of advanced computer graphics as well as to the inherent allure of its wildly imaginative possibilities. Rjurik Davidson notes that "many of the most successful films at the box office are either science fiction or fantasy," claiming "the most obvious reason for this is the massive advances in special effects that have occurred over the last thirty years" beginning with *Star Wars* (1977), a blend of both fantasy and science fiction (13). Before computer-generated imaging and special effects, animation – particularly Disney's version – was the primary mode through which filmmakers conveyed the genre. Fantasy films largely had to be animated or animation-hybrids because of the lack of special effects to portray the supernatural elements, lest they seem tacky or false. With the advent of CGI, however, filmmakers can endow these elements with properties closer to resembling the rich interior world of the human imagination and displayed in externalized, mimetic visual forms. Fowkes notes that "by 2006, the ten top

grossing films worldwide were all fantasy or science fiction, except *Titanic* (1997)" and in the top twenty-five, only one other film was not (36). Since 2006, other fantasy films have been released, such as the remaining installments in the *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* series, *Stardust* (2007), *Enchanted* (2007), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), and *Maleficent* (2014). Many of these and previous fantasy films are based on works of literature, popular novels or well-known fairy tales, and, of course, this recognition within cultural capital also contributes to their success.

With these major factors at play, the fantasy genre has taken off at great speed. In fact, not since the days of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) has it seen such immense commercial and popular success. Since the release of *Lord of the Rings:The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in 2001, fantasy films have broadened to a massive audience that includes viewers of all ages. This newfound resonance in the mainstream makes the genre relevant and ripe for the type of criticism that it has largely heretofore not received. This paper's underlying agenda is to bolster the currently sparse dialogue surrounding the fantasy film genre in order to keep our collective consciousness moving toward the liberation of the oppressed and deconstruction of binaries. Due to its popularity and the nature of the way it taps into the psyche – not to mention its potential to become utopian through its diegetic separations from the laws of physics and particulars of our own world's history – the fantasy film genre wields great influence on our culture. Unfortunately, what even progressive fantasy films are still lacking are the various representations of human experiences outside of

traditional gender binaries. Issues of race, social class, and the LGBT experience have barely begun to be addressed within the genre, and it is my ultimate intent to call attention to this need.

By nature, all fantasy, including the film genre, operates simultaneously on the literal and symbolic levels, and through literal and symbolic interpretations, many of its traditional syntactic and semantic elements have also recently, and rightfully, been criticized for perpetuating conservative notions of the roles and dynamics associated with gender, class, race, and sexual orientation. However, its access and interplay with the symbolic realm, dramatizing and externalizing the internal struggle of the subconscious within an Other-worldly setting and with fantastical semantic elements, also permits the potential for the genre's progressive influence. The genre is currently undergoing, at least in regard to gender issues, a self-reflexive phase that is subverting, altering, or exchanging its traditional symbolic elements and embedded ideology. Furthermore, this shift, whether it is mirroring shifts in the larger cultural views toward gender or helping to influence them, might also be carving a way for the rise of progressive portrayals of race, class, and sexuality in an understudied popular genre that has been dominated for decades by an ideology of heterosexual white male dominance.

This paper's primary argument centers on representations of gender in recent fantasy genre films as well as the industry substructure and cultural interchanges that have produced these films. My concerns pertain to the genre's influence on both individual, psychosocial formations of gender identity as well

as to its films' widely-popular representations of gender roles and dynamics which, in turn, can inform – and be informed by – our culture's discourse surrounding them. I am particularly invested in these topics insofar as these portrayals of gender reinforce or destabilize the gender binary of male and female in fantasy films, which, through their influence on identity formation, might contribute to limiting actual women's access to real power in society. In addition to exposing and evaluating the tacit gender ideologies and politics of these films, I hope to advance an ongoing cultural conversation about gender and fantasy films that might give rise to the possibility of other diverse narrative perspectives and portrayals within the genre.

Theorists in recent decades have made a clear case that gender is a socially-constructed and coded set of performances rather than an intrinsically arising identity. Postmodernist and feminist scholars have worked to deconstruct the binaries of gender representations in society in order to resist or subvert the norms perpetuated by heterosexual white male hegemony, which has dominated culture for centuries. Many proponents of this deconstruction, such as David Knights and Deborah Kerfoot, have as their primary goal "challenging the reification of the terms wherein the divisions between male and female, masculine and feminine, or men and women are treated as absolute, hierarchical, and unchanging" (432). Whether or not the binary is actually dissolved, however, "is of less importance than the extent to which...the hierarchical core of binary thinking around gender that is routinely taken for granted" is disrupted (450). These theoretical advances have implications not only for the formation of

individual gender identities but for social politics as well. As Surya Monro asserts in her article "Beyond Male and Female: Poststructuralism and the Spectrum of Gender," "the deconstruction of gender binaries [should] be combined with the development of a gender-pluralist, flexible model of gender [which then] points to the replacement of bipolar models of gender with a gender spectrum" (3). One can see that the gender binary must be simultaneously imploded and exploded, not only to subvert the power structures and epistemology which the binary endorses, but to enable the release of multiple perspectives from the position of Other in our culture and its products, such as fantasy films, which convey ideologies of gender to mass audiences.

The notion of gender as a performance, the variations of which lie on a spectrum, has already begun to emerge in fantasy films of the twenty-first century. Fantasy genre films of the last two decades have begun to make key moves toward destabilizing the gender binary found in traditional fairy tales Disney film *Frozen* (2013) – globally marketed as a family film, a typically conservative subset – to get a sense of a new breed of ideologies and politics of gender on display within the fantasy film genre.[1] One can also understand that these new kinds of gender portrayals and narratives that the genre is starting to show on screen demonstrate and reflect changes in the culture at large while simultaneously exposing individual viewers to stories that contribute to further

---

1 This animated film, loosely based on Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale "The Snow Queen," breaks from old tropes of the genre in three ways. First, prince-princess union is replaced with a reversal of expectation; the prince is revealed as a villain and the princess's actual love interest hails from a significantly lower social class. Secondly, the traditional hetero-erotic "true love's kiss" is substituted with an act of sisterly love. Thirdly, the two lead protagonists are females who seem to possess exceptional agency, intelligence, and power, and they both frequently fulfill the role of the rescuer.

developing these changes. In this way, one can argue, like Donna Haraway, who worked to prove this bilateral interaction of narrative and culture, that "the masculine hegemonic story of reality can be destabilized by telling a feminist story and this ought to transform cultural thinking about women" (144). Indeed, this thinking is being transformed. However, this transformation is far from reaching a utopian equality of the sexes, and, what is more, it still has not risen to include progressive portrayals of other experiences aside from gender that are outside of the social norm, such as other races, ethnicities, and queer identities. In other words, more binaries remain to be smashed within the genre. To achieve this, we must continue to promote what Knights and Kerfoot call a "strategy that denies a single unitary truth and promotes a epistemology where multiple sources of truth prevail" wherein these "differences are *not* seen as illegitimate deviations from the one true standard, but simply a part of the rich texture of human life and experience" (433). As of yet, many of our differences are being ignored in the fantasy film genre, a venue through which diverse mass audiences might be reached and embraced.

Chapter I. Engagement With Scholarship

As discussed previously, the fantasy genre has tremendous potential to influence both individual and social change. This is partly what leads scholar Robert Shelton to classify the genre, along with science fiction, under the category of the "utopian film genre" (Shelton 1). In worlds portrayed with magic or advanced technology, the possibilities for the creation of a true egalitarian society are permitted to coexist and to triumph over the lingering threat of a dystopia. Since the diegetic worlds of fantasy and science fiction films do not have to be based on reality in any sense, they are laden with potential to be free from all social norms and conventions. In terms of their ideologies and values, the worlds created by fantasy films therefore carry the promise of a truly perfect and liberated culture. This is because the fantasy genre provides a space in which traditional and progressive ideological values can perhaps be worked through and analyzed better when the action and conflicts they contain are not necessarily situated within our own cultural or social reality. Additionally, it is my argument that one can see an emergent self-reflexive phase of the fantasy film genre that is already beginning to subvert, alter, or exchange its traditional symbolic elements and embedded ideology for more progressive possibilities.

As suggested above, it is the inherent Other-ness of fantasy worlds that engenders the films in the genre with potential for utopian creation. Moreover, the advent of CGI and special effects has made the genre more popular because it has aided in doing what was impossible before: making the fantastical semantic

elements of the films seem, ironically, more "real." All genres have a semantic makeup (Altman 31), but few are as widely recognizable as fantasy. After all, they are the stuff of the fairy tales we all grew up hearing: fantasy creatures such as dragons and trolls, outlandish costumes, and enchanted objects within the narrative of a young male or female hero struggling against the forces of evil usually driven by an older, often magic-possessing villain. Of course, no fantasy would be complete without the explicitly-phallic elements of swords, wands, and towers. For modern viewers, all of these semantic elements represent the fantastic and the whimsical Other which they crave. Fantasy films are able "to visually represent estrangement – that is, to show us other, wonderful, horrific, or thought-provoking worlds" (Davidson 13). Walls, mirrors, rabbit holes, wardrobes, windows, and Platform 9 ¾ all present in some form in nearly every fantasy serve as signifiers to "mark the boundary between the land of fairy – the kingdom of magic – and the mundane world in which we live" (13) (See Figure 1). This new world is presented as Other by being set apart by time or space, mostly in "medieval setting[s]" (Fowkes 31), distinguished through the elements of *mise en scène,* including costuming, set design, and props. All of these elements of semiotics and setting categorize the fantasy genre with those that Thomas Schatz would label as having "determinate space" (27). One fixed trait of the world in which fantasies are set is its "fundamental break with our sense of reality...an 'ontological rupture'" of some kind (Fowkes 2). By providing a gateway to another world in proximity to the world depicting our own reality, fantasy pulls audiences into a space that provides possibilities where imagination is the only

potential limitation.

Figure 1. The hole wall in *Stardust* serves as the ontological rupture between England and the fantasy realm of Stormhold (*Stardust.* Paramount. 2007.).

Of course, upon noting this rupture into a Other-world of fantastical semantic elements, one cannot continue further before pointing to the most crucial ingredient of the genre: the element of magic or the supernatural. Magic is what Stephen Donaldson calls "the most fruitful metaphor available to this kind of fiction....it is an expression of the inner imaginative energy of the characters – an expression of their charisma, their force of personality – an expression of the part of being human that transcends physiology" and "a means of discussing the ways in which human beings are greater than the sum of their parts" (5). This force that solves or creates problems, this supernatural element of magic, is essential to the plot of fantasies. Often it is evil, but one should not take it as a straight representation of evil. Good characters can wield magic as well, as one sees in *The Lord of the Rings* and Harry Potter texts. Moreover, it should be noted that any fantasy film and its elements "should not simply be analogy or allegory – that is, it should not be a story that could be told without the fantastical elements; it should be a story where those elements are essential and crucial to the plot" (Davidson 14). Magic, among all other semantic elements of the story, becomes

necessary to the distinct way in which we view and interpret fantasy films.

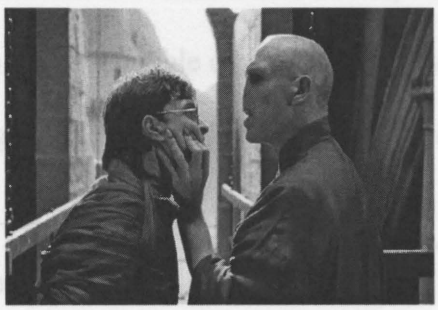
Their syntax and its symbolic mode of conveyance is another reason audiences have flocked to fantasy literature and films throughout history. Of course the fantastical elements are wondrous, and the bare-bones syntax of the genre – heroes on great quests with great obstacles and the struggle between good and evil – conveys lasting themes meaningful to the human experience. Like all genre films, as Matthew Ehrlich argues in his article "Facts, Truth, and Bad Journalists in the Movies," fantasy films "are typically structured around conflicts between characters who represent competing cultural values" (502). However, these, which can often end up being highly recognizable tropes of good battling evil, also serve the deeper purpose of symbolically externalizing the human psyche. As Donaldson defines it:

> Put simply, fantasy is a form of fiction in which the internal crises or conflicts or processes of the characters are dramatized as if they were external individuals or events. Crudely stated, this means that in fantasy the characters meet themselves – or parts of themselves, their own needs/problems/exigencies – as actors on the stage of the story, and so the internal struggle to deal with those needs/problems/exigencies is played out as an external struggle in the action of the story. (3-4)

Therefore, when Harry battles Voldemort he is fighting a part of himself, a point which fans of the novels and films would find directly echoed in J.K. Rowling's use of the magical soul-containing objects known horcruxes which create an

inseparable link between the protagonist and the villain. At the end of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows, Part Two* (2011), this psychological fragment of Voldemort, magically embedded within Harry, must be destroyed, and with it the darker, threatening forces within Harry (see Figure 2). In fact, one could argue that nearly all of the elements of *mise en scène* in fantasies films, including settings of dark woods and foreboding castles, are treated with pathetic fallacy; the human feelings with which they are endowed are subliminal and subconscious, intended to mirror the state of the human psyche. As Donaldson would explain, in fantasy "the world is an expression of the characters" and "the ultimate justification for all the external details arises from the characters themselves. The characters confer reality on their surroundings...In fantasy, the outside is an externalization, a metaphor, of the internal" (4) and "an internal struggle dramatized as external events" (16). Rjurik Davidson argues that being an "essentially symbolist mode", "this externalization of an inner soul [or psyche] is something fantasy does well" (15). Access to the symbolic makes the genre incredibly powerful; since it can tap into our common dreams, so to speak, engaging with fantasy becomes both an intensely personalized and a highly socialized act.

Figure 2. Harry Potter confronts Voldemort, the villain who serves to symbolically represent the darker, threatening forces within the hero (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows, Part 2.* Warner Brothers Studios. 2012.).



The psychoanalytic method of interpreting and evaluating the fantasy genre necessitates that it becomes, arguably, also a genre of "indeterminate space" in that it focuses on "the struggle of the principal characters to bring their own views in line with either one another's or, more often, in line with that of the larger community" (Schatz 29). The struggle of the *ego* or *superego* to tame the *id* in order for an individual to be fulfilled and functional in society is essentially what fantasy films portray through their dramatic unfolding between the hero(es) and the obstacles, monsters, and villains. In narratives of clearly direct oppositional forces, presented through fantastical creatures and elements, one can see much overlap between fantasy and other genres. It shares many semantic elements, monsters included, with science fiction and horror. Similarly, the literal syntax of the genre, such as a hero overcoming obstacles and fighting evil, is the same as many action films. However, it is this mode of externalizing the symbolic realm of the human psyche, of dramatizing on screen the internal struggle within the subconscious in figurative relays, which makes fantasy unique.

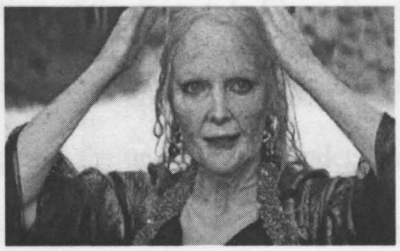
Uniqueness, however, is not a charm against criticism, and the critical awareness of the genre's power to access the subconscious leads to the crux of this essay. Fowkes contends that "fantasy has the potential to challenge the status quo since it can explore what would otherwise be repressed" in the psyche (42). She cites the work of Joshua David Bellin, who concludes that "even though fantasy films offer pleasurable experiences for the viewer, they routinely mask pernicious ideological messages" (51).[2] Taking Bellin's conclusion as valid, one can reason

2 Bellin fails, however, as Fowkes comments, to "note that 'realistic' stories may be just as, if not *more,* pernicious" (51).

that children, and perhaps many adults, are not consciously aware that they are viewing an external dramatization of the internal world when they watch fantasy; they enjoy the stories merely for their fantastical elements and relatively simple plots. Viewing the film through such an uneducated lens can lead to exposure to the genre's traditionally conservative ideologies conveyed through highly recognizable semantics and syntax. An example of such a "pernicious" ideology falls under fantasy's stereotypical portrayal of gender, especially in its fairy-tale subset of stories and films.

Any criticism of fairy tales, both in literature and film, will eventually raise the point that they "perpetuate sexist and patriarchal paradigms" (Fowkes 44). Often they feature aged, virulent women at odds with young, passive beauties, the objects of both their gaze and the audience's. In fact, until recently in the genre, whenever women have been presented with high intelligence and skill, such as Hermione in the Harry Potter series, Angelika in *The Brothers Grimm* (2005), and Yvaine in *Stardust*, they are secondary or tertiary characters at most. Featured female protagonists, like the Disney princesses or Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, are naïve, passive, or pursued victims. The villainous roles into which females are cast are even more recognizable. Nearly every fairy tale has its evil witch, powerful and ugly, or else superficially and falsely beautiful, females who point out the "ambivalence about femininity in patriarchal society" (Fowkes 149-50). Although male villains in fantasy films such as Sauron from *The Lord of the Rings* and Voldemort from *Harry Potter* typically pursue immortality and power alone and do not care for physical appearance, most female villains seek

immortality and power and also vainly chase after youthful beauty (see Figures 3-5). However, Susan Cahill points out in her analysis of the witches' gender portrayals in *Stardust* and *The Brothers Grimm* that in these film's resolutions "it is the aging woman who simulates ideal femininity who is penalized in the narrative and whose masquerade [of youth] must be exploded [and] it is not only the masquerade...that is punishable, but more so the women's desire to appropriate the visual order" (Cahill 61). The witches in these films attempt to appear young in order to further their persuasive powers and deceptions. The conservative logic of these films, however, place these desires in the realm of evil.


Figures 3-5. Contrast the visual appearance of the villain Sauron from *The Lord of the Rings*: *Fellowship of the Ring* (New Line. 2001) to Lamia's appropriation of the visual order in *Stardust* (Paramount. 2007.).

Chapter II. Tracing the Genre's Self-Reflexive Phase: *Shrek, The Brothers Grimm,* and *Stardust*

Despite the persistence of the gender binary within fantasy films, the genre has begun to make progressive ideological advances in films like *Shrek* (2001), *The Brothers Grimm*, and *Stardust,* which exemplify the genre's self-reflexive and self-parodying phase, and, in films like *Snow White and the Huntsman*, its subsequent reemergence under a pure-fantasy mode. As with any lasting genre, the self-reflexive phase is usually where films develop the potential to subvert or alter the genre's traditional semiotics. *Shrek*, an animated comedy-fantasy hybrid, was an answer to Disney's domination of the fairy tale films. Fowkes notes, in her criticism of the film, that "as a spoof of fairy tales, *Shrek* does more than just make a lot of jokes, [sic] it also exposes the underlying gender codes that form the very structure of the tales" (115). Here "it is not just Shrek [voiced by Mike Myers], but the princess [Fiona, voiced by Cameron Diaz], who is the beast in this tale." She is an ogre herself, and even in her beautiful form "she is actually a skilled fighter, a good hunter, and good sport: the 'sign' of the princess is a sham" (118). Furthermore, Fiona takes no criticism or punishment for her deviance from the traditional norm. This generic twist reasserts that it is acceptable for women to adopt what have been perceived as masculine traits. In contrast, the villain of the film, Lord Farquaad (voiced by John Lithgow) is portrayed with a "simpering voice," a "short stature," and a "pampered, prissy lifestyle," which are "counterpoised to essential qualities of the 'real' man [Shrek] in the story" (121). As Fowkes suggests, "This seems consistent with the real world where it is

(finally) acceptable for women to be like men, but it is still taboo for men to exhibit qualities associated with women" (121). *Shrek* falls relatively early in the self-reflexive phase of the genre, hitting the silver screen even before *Harry Potter* and *The Fellowship of the Ring* turned the tides of fantasy by drawing in record-level audiences. Although it does not gain ground in subverting the conservative masculine ideal, at least the portrayal of the feminine has begun to shift, emphasized by Fiona's remaining – against the audience's expectations – an ogre at the end once her curse is broken by "true love's kiss" (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. The Princess Fiona in her ultimate ogre form (*Shrek*. Dreamworks. 2001.).

In *The Brothers Grimm*, a live action film starring Matt Damon and Heath Ledger as fictitious versions of the historical storytelling brothers, one can see a continuance in the evolution of gender roles in the fantasy genre; however, this shift only occurs within the spectrum of female characters who are fighting for good. At the film's beginning, Jacob (Damon) and William (Ledger) are con-artists making a living by staging fake exorcisms and monster-killings for towns believing they are afflicted by evil creatures and witches. They feign courage, and they use the hyper-masculine image they created for capitalist gain or, in Jacob's case, to seduce women. When not acting, William is portrayed as bookish and

timid, and Jacob is nagging and a coward. Their heroic masculinity is nothing more than a sham, which is meant to contribute to the humor of the film as they find themselves at odds with not only Napoleon Bonaparte's soldiers but also an actual witch, the Mirror Queen (played by Monica Belluci). To defeat her, they require the aid of Angelika (played by Lena Heady), a frigid, highly masculinized –but beautiful – secondary heroine. She becomes not only the object of both Jacob and William's competing romantic desires, but also an active, desiring subject in her own right as she helps them defeat the Mirror Queen (who crumbles into the shards of a mirror) (see Figure 7) and, in the end, Angelika splits her affections between the male protagonists. Therefore, the heterosexual coupling, traditionally common at the end of most genres – fantasy included – is subverted. In the closing scene, costumed in a dress for the first time in the film, Angelika dances with the other virgins freed from the Mirror Queen's curse. She kisses and smiles at both Jacob *and* William. Her frigidity is broken, proven an act as well, and the film ends with a comedic dance that is a carnival of gender roles.

Figure 7. Monica Belluci as the Mirror Queen in *Brothers Grimm* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 2005.).

The symbolic elements and ideology of gender in the fantasy genre become less subversive in *Stardust*, a fantasy-comedy hybrid in the same vein as *The Brothers Grimm*. The portrayals of gender seem to backslide into

conservative ideals. The hero, Tristan (played by Charlie Cox), embarks on a mission to fetch a fallen star that landed in a fairy realm separated by a stone wall from his realistic, mundane world. He wants to fetch the star to win the heart of his "true love." However, as he passes through the wall, he enters into the ontological rupture which Fawkes describes; there the star is actually a young, beautiful female named Yvaine (played by Claire Danes), who, although put off and reluctant at first, eventually becomes his *truer* love. However, Tristan is not the only one hunting Yvaine. Three witch-sisters, their leader being Lamia (played by Michelle Pfeiffer), also seek the newly fallen star in an effort of vanity: they want to stay young forever. As Rjurik David explains, "Yvaine's heart, when eaten, has the ability to rejuvenate them. The witches are, thus, symbols for the search for eternal youth. Youth itself is also equated with power" (15). Like the Mirror Queen, Lamia also tries to manipulate the visual representation of herself to appear younger and beautiful, which she achieves by eating a piece of a formerly fallen star's heart. What sets this new cluster of witches apart from the simply old and ugly witches of previous fairy tales, Cahill argues, is their attempt to acquire beauty "through artificial means" and to control the representations of the visual so as to confound their immediate association with evil (61). In the end, after her two sisters have died as victims to their own wicked devices, Lamia, once again aged and hag-like, remains to be destroyed, which is done through Yvaine's shining power. She is therefore punished for her deviance, being "killed by Yvaine's excess as spectacle," and, as Cahill points out, "significantly, it is the gaze that ultimately kills her" (62). She literally explodes

into pieces as she looks upon Yvaine's light (see Figure 8). According the traditional logic of the fantasy, her age and ugliness must capitulate to youth and beauty.

Susan Cahill notes, "Both [*The Brothers Grimm* and *Stardust*] are consciously self-reflexive in terms of the fairy-tale genre," but "where both films lose their humor and irony...is in relation to the older woman" (58). All of the uncoupled featured women are portrayed as old and evil witches. They are virulent and powerful –and can even appear lovely – but are a threat. The other women in the films are either supposedly virginal love-interests or else mothers, and together these three types of female figures "provide the contours of a patriarchal vision of womanhood," the witches being the ones "unable to fulfill the role of...a 'good woman'" (Davidson 16). This notion of the "ideal female" is something Robin Wood notes is common within "American capitalist ideology" of all classic Hollywood genres (62).

Figure 8. Yvaine embraces Tristan to destroy Lamia in an act of shining power (*Stardust*. Paramount. 2007.).

Cahill's analysis is sound. Nevertheless, one can easily diverge from her claim that the *only* point where *Stardust* loses irony is in relation to the older women. One can contend that Yvaine, although intelligent and witty, is relatively

passive throughout the film and a weak representation of femininity. After all, she begins as a "birthday present" for Tristan's romantic interest in England, an object or commodity both he and the witches hunt for different ends. Initially, Tristan chains her to force her to cooperate. In the end, when it seems that her active force and power is what destroys Lamia, one must remember that she says she "couldn't have done that" without him and his love. However, the film does contain a few radical claims. For example, Tristan adopts his most spectacular masculine traits, such as sword-fighting, from a pirate. His mentor, Captain Shakespeare (played by Robert De Niro) maintains a rough, hyper-masculine exterior but is revealed to be a cross-dressing, effeminate, and supposedly homosexual male, suggesting, once again, that gender is merely a performance and that the fantasy genre does allow for some incursions into strict gender codes.

Chapter III. *Snow White and the Huntsman*: Taking the Genre Further

Both *The Brothers Grimm* and *Stardust*, which together represent an ironic and humorous turn in the genre, are films embarking out in the direction of more progressive ideological gender portrayal; ultimately, they still fail to complete the quest. 2013's fantasy blockbuster, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, however, provides what is arguably the most dramatic turnover of ideology in the genre thus far. Now the genre has begun to dip back into a reformed pure-fantasy mode – at least in regards to the gender representations on *both* sides of the protagonist/antagonist dichotomy. The film, directed by Rupert Sanders, derives its narrative from versions of the old German fairy-tale of Snow White compiled by the Grimm brothers. However, there are major differences between the film and the tale. For example, although Snow White (played by Kristen Stewart) begins the film as an innocent, ineffectual victim, she ends as a strong heroine and leader of men who meets her stepmother-queen, Ravenna (played by Charlize Theron), in battle on her own terms. She is paired with the unnamed huntsman of the tale (played by Christopher Hemsworth), who teaches her to adopt masculine traits while she teaches him to adopt feminine ones, suggesting the interchangeability and inherent instability of gender. Similarly, the antagonist duo, Ravenna and her brother, Finn (played by Sam Spruell), muddle the lines between gender and also sexuality. The filmmakers use dialogue and elements of *mise en scène* to create a further subversion of the genre's ideological coding.

In the film's first act, Snow White's portrayal as the heroine does not reflect well on her sex. She is orphaned in the prologue, her mother, the queen,

falling victim to plague, and her father, the king, being murdered by Ravenna, whom he takes as his second wife under her deceptive misrepresentation of her image and character. Snow White fails to escape in the aftermath of Ravenna's usurpation of the throne, and she is imprisoned. Although she is crafty, which she demonstrates by surviving in Ravenna's dungeon, she still seems a rather passive, victimized object. Her costume is nothing elaborate, just a dirty dress, but still a traditional signifier of the feminine (see Figure 9). The only significant props in her cell are the rather infantilizing little dolls in the rough image of her deceased parents. When another young maid is locked in a cell beside her, Snow White is anxious to hear news of the outside world; the camera provides close-ups of her face through the bars. It is not until a magpie leads her to a nail stuck in the mortar outside her cell window that she pulls it out and begins to plot her escape, an act which heralds the beginning of her slow interchange of gender.

Snow White's ability to escape and emergence into the masculine arrives just in time, too. Ravenna discovers in her mirror that Snow White's existence threatens her power and immortality, and she sends Finn to fetch the princess in her cell. As he stands before the door, the camera gives us a shot of Snow White lying on her cot through the bars, and a reverse close up shot of Finn's face showing his pleasure. She is the object of his perverted gaze. He enters the cell and sits beside her. We get a series of shots and reverse shots between his face and hers; her acting style continues to be timid and afraid and his, sinister. We also get an intermix of close-up shots showing his hands caressing her thighs and bosom. She seems to seduce him, but then we get a close shot of her face showing

a switch to anger and another shot of her pulling out the nail and sticking it into Finn's gut. This is the symbolic first thrust into an increasingly active position in the film.

Figure 9. At the beginning of the film, Snow White, played by Kristen Stewart, dons a costume coded as feminine (*Snow White and the Huntsman*. Universal. 2012.).

Of course, Snow White's meshing and interchange of feminine and masculine performances are not immediately normalized. This is a slow process. The dialogue between Ravenna and her magic mirror makes it clear in the first act that Snow White is an embodiment of innocence and purity, and, as such, she is a threat to the queen. However, that also means she is the salvation for the land; her inner forces are the counter-curse to Ravenna's. Even her name presents a contrast to Ravenna's, who is nearly always surrounded by a swarm of ravens or crows and who is usually costumed in black. However, Ravenna is highly masculinized – or rather a militant feminist, which will be discussed later – and Snow White must come to meet her on what can be perceived as either masculine or feminist terms.

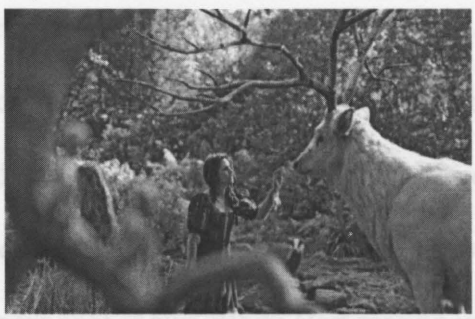
Snow White's encounter with White Hart in the fairy forest visually displays the most significant shift in Snow White's gender representations. Although this scene follows two previous moments where her beauty tamed a beast –the others being the first gaze of the drunken huntsman coming to capture

her and the other from a computer-animated bridge troll who retreats from his attack having faced her down – this is a more active portrayal. She is not being hunted or attacked and requiring her physical beauty to save her; she is summoned and approaches her destiny as a force-filled subject of inner beauty. In a low-angled shot to capture the top of her head and her chest (or heart), the camera shows Snow White sleeping on forest moss while what is intended to be morning sunlight hits her face. She wakes to mysterious, enchanting diegetic music playing. We get a close-up of her face, showing surprise, and then a reverse shot showing computer-generated magpies, out of which small, gray, androgynous fairies emerge. They beckon her to follow and the shot follows their flight as they take off. The camera reverses back to Snow White's face as she rises to her feet. It is worth noting that by this point in the film, Snow White is no longer in a dress. The dress has been destroyed or intentionally altered so that the top half is now more of a long, but still feminized, tunic, and her lower half is costumed in more masculine leggings. Next a series of long and mid-shots with several seconds between them show her from the side walking through the forest toward the sunlight, pushing aside the fauna as she goes. The shots alternately show computer-generated animals and fantasy creatures, with reverse shots also directing our (and their) gaze back to Snow White. Meanwhile, the non-diegetic soundtrack has returned, its music rising for a momentous occasion.

By this point in the film, Snow White and the huntsman have been through several adventures together (but have still shown little sign of romantic connection). They have also joined with the seven dwarfs, whose blind and aged

leader, Muir (played by Bob Hoskins in his final role), represents the archetype of the wise old man, a personification of wisdom. Up until this point, Snow White has been trying to get to the Duke's castle where she hopes the resistance fighters will be able to help her. The huntsman, however, has been helping her for capital gain. She has been following him, relying on him for protection from Finn and his men. In other words, she has been dependent on a male for leadership. In this scene, however, she leaves the males behind to follow her own calling, and now they begin to follow her. The camera shows shots of her from behind and reverse shots of the huntsman and dwarves walking forward, supposedly in the same direction. Then we see Snow White enter a clearing. The camera captures a long shot of her back, which is silhouetted against the light of the rising sun, suggesting an approaching end to the figurative darkness of Ravenna's reign. A following long shot shows us a large tree in a clearing – recalling Edenic imagery – and surrounded by water. Around are many pairs of CGI creatures. Below the tree is a large, silver hart with antlers spreading up like tree branches. From a long side shot, we see Snow White approach White Hart, as he is called, which also

Figure 10. Snow White approaches the White Hart (*Snow White and the Huntsman*. Universal. 2012).



begs the interpretation of a white or "pure" heart and therefore a tie to Snow

White (see Figure 10). Furthermore, Snow White literally walks on the water to get to the Hart, recalling an image of the Christ-figure and therefore her status as the savior of the film.

Acquiring this role as the hero and redeemer, Snow White begins to attract the following of the males in her company. In the subsequent frame, we get a mid-shot of the huntsman, dazed and confused, witnessing Snow White approach White Hart. He wants to continue forward – perhaps because as a hunter this creature would be the ideal prey –but Muir reaches out to hold him back, implying that the men cannot approach something so pure. A following mid-shot shows Snow White and White Hart, again from the side, as she reaches out to caress its head and neck, after which we see the hart bow before her. Muir's son informs his father what is happening, and Muir responds by saying that White Hart is blessing her. The huntsman is confused. Muir responds, explaining, "You have eyes, huntsman, but you do not see. She is life itself. She will heal the land. Gold or no gold, where she goes, I follow." The other dwarves nod in agreement. Snow White, validated as a symbol of life, becomes their leader. Immediately, however, there is a dramatic shift in the *mise en scène* as an arrow whizzes across another shot of Snow White and the Hart, shooting the latter. The soundtrack speeds up and enters a minor key. The lighting dims. We get close-up shots of the woodland creatures and Snow White expressing horror and fleeing, and the next frame shows one of Finn's men with a bow. We understand what has happened. The next shot shows White Hart rearing up and bursting into butterflies. The remainder of the scene resembles the action genre as the huntsman and dwarves

enter into battle with Finn and his men. In the aftermath, we learn that Gus, one of the dwarves, is killed and Snow White cries over him. These, however, are her last tears of film. After this scene, the huntsman gives her a sword, and her transition to her hardened masculine performance is almost complete.

Symbolically, Snow White is innocence in the film, but on the literal level, unlike most other fantasy heroines, she does not remain passive, pursued, or dependent on males. After she wakes from the sleeping curse at the Duke's castle, she begins to champion her own struggle against evil and oppression, causing men (and women) to follow her. Snow White, in what would traditionally be a man's role in the fantasy genre, gives the speech to motivate the people gathered around her to fight, shouting, "I will become your weapon, forged by the fire that is in your hearts." In the final battle, she leads the army. She wears chain mail and armor and maintains a figurative phallus represented through the prop of the sword; her adoption of the masculine performance is complete (see Figure 11). She is ready to meet Ravenna on her own terms. The filmmakers demonstrate this readiness during the battle through many shots of a masculinized Snow White, suddenly skilled with the sword, leaping through fire and fighting her way up to the tower where Ravenna waits.

After Ravenna is defeated, Snow White drops her masculine performance, but she is still portrayed as a leader. Immediately following Ravenna's death we get a shot with flowers blooming on a tree and life returning just before the final scene where Snow White is crowned. She is once again the object of gaze in the great hall, with close shots of her face cut with reverse close shots of the various

characters from the film looking at her. The most important of this series of shots are those cutting between Snow White and the huntsman, who stands in the back of the hall. There is no kiss; in fact, they are distanced by both space and crowds of people. Although their smiles suggest a sequel and perhaps a blooming romance, the logic of the film does not dictate that it must end in a heterosexual union. That aspect of ideological gender portrayal is left absent or at the very least ambiguous.

Figure 11. Snow White in masculinized armor near the film's climactic battle (*Snow White and the Huntsman.* Universal. 2012.).

The sense that Snow White can shift back and forth between feminine and masculine performances is one way in which the film is quite progressive for the fantasy genre. In fact, its only downfall is the casting of Kristen Stewart, whose role in *Twilight* (2008) has been criticized for being rather *anti*-feminist. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the masculinization of the heroine is not the only progressive claim this film makes. In a pattern opposite to Snow White, the huntsman actually comes to adopt feminized attributes as the film progresses. When we first see the huntsman, he is placed in a muddy and rudimentary street setting. The huntsman carries a bottle, and Hemsworth's acting style clearly conveys drunkenness. He gets in a fight outside a tavern, during which he ends up in the mud and a trough of dirty water. However, what begins with dirt and

violence ends with cleanliness and softness; we see him in the great hall at the end with washed and trimmed hair and a cleaner costume. This makes sense when we understand that the huntsman symbolically represents what is at stake in the conflict between Ravenna and Snow White. He is the everyman, which is implied by his lack of a name. He can work for an evil queen like Ravenna, but he is not truly functional or fulfilled without a good woman. The stereotypical gender roles have reversed. Snow White must save him and not through love, either. Hence, in the deathbed scene, when Snow White is under the poisoned apple's curse, the huntsman mourns the loss of her goodness and not a romance. We get many melodramatic, feminizing close shots of his tears. He weeps as he explains that it was her goodness, much like his late wife's, that saved him from himself, but he never once says he loved her. His tearful kiss – on which he does not linger –is not romantic but platonic, a subtle variation on the trope of true love. It does not result in a concrete heterosexual union but rather in their exchange of gender performances. Shortly following this scene is the battle in which Snow White, as mentioned before, is highly masculinized, and the huntsman, lacking armor and following Snow White, is portrayed as slightly feminized, or at least not the stereotypical alpha male of the genre. Thus both hero and heroine unify performances of both genders within themselves, even though the two are not unified sexually.

The film's protagonists, moreover, are not the only characters to subvert conservative notions about gender. The villainous duo also displays ambiguity and reversals. Finn's make-up gives him a paleness to contrast the ruddy features

of the huntsman. His hair is almost white and is perfectly combed and cropped. His costume is black, denoting that he is evil, but his tunic extends below the waist and flares out like a skirt (see Figure 12). Later in the film, particularly as we see him in combat, we learn that his only seemingly masculine characteristics, his strength and harshness, are dependent on Ravenna's power. He and his masculinity are suggested to be extensions of her, and in fact, there are scenes to imply an incestuous bond between them as he caresses and kisses her shoulders from behind. When the huntsman impales Finn on a tree trunk, we get a close shot of his aging face, aided through special effects, and his tears as Ravenna refuses to waste her remaining strength to save him.

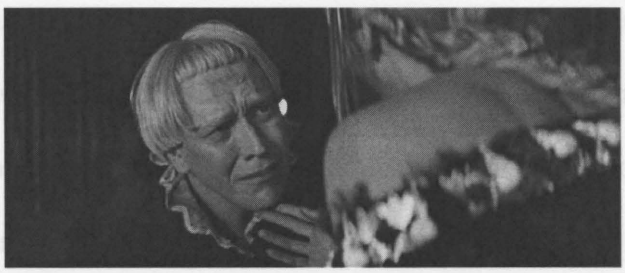


Figure 12. Finn's character carries many feminine or androgynous traits throughout the film (*Snow White and the Huntsman.* Universal. 2012).

The progressive ideology of the film, which suggests that gender is a performance, becomes most obvious through Ravenna's character. For most of the film she is highly masculinized, costumed in black or metallic dresses with sharp angles and bird-like flares. Theron's star persona contributes a physical desirability, but her acting style is deliberately over-the top; she never smiles, she dominates the shots, and she literally sucks the life from others. However, when it serves her, she wears femininity as if it were a costume; she simpers and feigns helplessness to seduce Snow White's father, for example. Once they begin to

consummate their marriage in bed, she exposes her masculinized persona and kills him. Furthermore, she not only occasionally puts on a feminine performance, but she also blurs the lines of sex and sexuality. Before she poisons Snow White with the apple in the forest, she disguises herself as William, Snow White's friend from childhood. Here she is performing not only masculinity but the male sex itself. She even kisses Snow White in male form right before she shifts back to female form, endowing the entire scene with Sapphic undertones. Ravenna's character intermixes and interchanges not only gender but sex and sexuality as well.

The culmination of these ideological advances within the fantasy genre emerges in the final showdown between Snow White and Ravenna. Set in Ravenna's tower, itself a phallic symbol, we get a series of shots and reverse shots of Snow White approaching the queen, whose back is turned. When the showdown commences, Snow White seems the weaker of the two. The camera captures her struggle, giving us close ups of her body as she falls to the floor repeatedly, struck down by Ravenna who towers over her. We even see the blood in Snow White's mouth. However, as Ravenna moves in with a knife to cut out Snow White's heart, Snow White stabs her with her own weapon, a masculinized and also slightly-homoerotic act of female-female penetration with a phallic prop. We get a shot of the queen staggering backward, gasping for air, and collapsing to the floor in front of her magic mirror and then a close shot of her face, staring off into space and clearly suffering. The soundtrack turns sad. Snow White, standing over her, tells her, "You can't have my heart," in a tone partly defiant and partly sympathetic. Unlike Lamia near the end *Stardust*, however, this pity for Ravenna

lasts. As the camera shows a close up of Ravenna's face taking its last breath and then rapidly aging, the audience can see that she, too, has suffered deeply.

In a sense, Ravenna's quest to exact revenge against men is semi-justified; she believes she is a victim of a male-dominated world. Her quest against Snow White, however, is not justified. Through Ravenna's dialogue, the film transparently exposes what might seem to be exaggerated – albeit valid – claims about gender relations. Just before she murders Snow White's father in bed, for example, she whispers to him, "Men use women. They use them, and when they finish with them they toss us to the dogs like scraps. When a woman stays young and beautiful forever, the world is hers." She expresses similar victimized sentiments when she tries to kill Snow White, telling her, "You don't even realize how lucky you are to never know what it is like to grow old." Like Lamia and the Mirror Queen, Ravenna attempts to obtain beauty through artificial and magical means and to control the visual representation of herself and therefore to control men. However, she preys on young females in order to accomplish this. Although Ravenna has reasonable cause to blame men for her perceived need to remain beautiful, her means of maintaining her beauty and power are rather anti-feminist. She mostly takes out her anti-male sentiments on females, and that, according to the film's logic, is why she must die. The film requires that Ravenna, a "fascist of feminism" (Gleiberman, "Snow White and the Huntsman"), must be destroyed by Snow White, a militant feminist of another kind. Nevertheless, Snow White has a measure pity for the queen – even as she kills her – because she understands Ravenna's desperate desire to try to seize power in a male-dominated world.

It is obvious that *Snow White and the Huntsman* makes boldly progressive ideological claims. As audiences see these convolutions, these twists, turns, and reversals played out on screen and in the fantasy genre, they can expect that the it will become a genre of "social order" and "social integration" (Schatz 35). The heroes or heroines will defeat the forces threatening their worlds, and they will reconcile their own inner conflicts as they align with or redefine those worlds' terms. Therefore, once again we see that the genre's utopian possibilities.

Chapter IV. *Maleficent*

The latest installment in the fantasy film genre's self-reflexive, progressive phase is Disney's high-concept summer release *Maleficent* (2014). The film earned nearly $70 million in its opening weekend and nearly $400 million in its theatrical run worldwide (IMDB), proving not only the genre's continued popularity and relevance but also its widespread engagement with contemporary culture. This film, however, goes further than any in the genre thus far in avoiding the ideological capitulation to the hegemony of heterosexual male-dominance that has clouded the fantasy mainstream for so long. As a remaking and retelling of the fairy tale "Sleeping Beauty," including the 1959 Disney film version, *Maleficent* pushes its female characters and feminine power into the foreground – and, quite literally, the battleground – in order to subvert the stereotypical princess-rescue fantasies of the past. Building on films such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Snow White and the Huntsman,* this film similarly depicts a female protagonist prevailing without the eventual assurance that she will pair with a man. Taking the genre even further, however, *Maleficent* divorces itself from the trope of the aging or disfigured powerful female villain who preys on the heroine; instead the film offers a female protagonist anti-hero, Maleficent, who is also a sort of *anti*-villain set at odds with her own internal desires and fears, which clash, literally and symbolically, with a patriarchal system of oppression and violence. Moreover, the protagonist Aurora – who, in the original animated version, has less than twenty lines of dialogue and falls passively into the arms of Prince Phillip – actively pursues non-sexual female bonds and is thrust into a

leadership role without the previously-conditional prince-as-mate.

Even in its pre-production stages, *Maleficent* seemed poised to carry the genre further into its emerging progressive phase. The impact of debut director Robert Stromberg – known mainly for his career in visual effects – may have become subsumed under the greater ramifications of the screenplay. As a co-writer, Linda Woolverton, who also had her hand in previous gender-progressive Disney films like *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Mulan* (1998), and Tum Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), proved an ideal choice to cast a similar spell on *Maleficent*. Moreover, Angelina Jolie, who is frequently touted in the media for her work with humanitarian and women's-aid causes, adds a powerful star persona to the lead role, endowing Maleficent's character with her celebrity status, charm, and penchant for social justice. Elle Fanning included, no other working star today has Jolie's fame or reputation. This trait automatically places her character's storyline at the forefront of the audience's attention.

Maleficent opens with a once-upon-a-time voice-over narration, eventually revealed to belong to a fully-grown Aurora. Her claim is to provide the "true" account of events surrounding her story, which immediately begins re-appropriating Maleficent's storyline from the patriarchal revisions that have circulated for centuries since the fairytale originated. Aurora's narration situates the "new" storyline in between two kingdoms, the realm of the humans and "the Moors" of the fairies, both of which initially seem divided by class differences and basic governing principles but which also distinguish themselves by their gender politics. The kingdom of the humans is industrial, war-like, monarchical,

and clearly male-dominated. Whenever the diegesis unfolds in this setting, the camera's filters are nearly always dark, the lighting is sparse, and the soundtrack is grim. The humans' costumes consist primarily of metallic armor or black, brown, or gray fabrics. The sets are constructed from materials meant to be stone and iron, an element the film purports to be mortally-damaging to fairies. Furthermore, nearly every character featured as belonging to the human world is male, aside from the queen, whose character is short-lived and only delivers a couple of lines. In other words, the human kingdom in this version is portrayed more negatively than the patriarchal setting of the original animated production, which is nearly identical to the setting of all traditional fairy tales (see Figure 13).

The Moors, on the other hand, are firmly rooted in progressive, utopian possibilities. They have a more peaceful, bountiful, egalitarian society protected by magic and existing under the guidance of female power. Stromberg's flair for rich CGI fills this domain with a plethora of recognizably semantic genre elements: glowing and floating magical flora and fauna, winged fairies (mostly androgynous in appearance), and tall, gnarled creatures reminiscent of the Ents of Middle-Earth, among others. Everything in the Moors exists as a seeming reversal of the natural order of the kingdom of the humans; plants seem to root up into the sky or hover, creatures whose images recall aquatic life-forms seem to fly, and a female, Maleficent, is the most powerful being (see Figure 14). With all of their magic and egalitarianism, the Moors and its inhabitants function as the potential symbolic space of the psyche, and – since this space can also serve as a foundation for the individual's capability to affect society – they also operate

within the intersections of socio-politics to suggest utopian possibilities. As film critic Jordan Shapiro, in his cultural analysis of the film, contends, "In *Maleficent,* we see two competing social structures, the monarchy of the human kingdom and the utopian Democracy of the Moors. The humans order the universe into resources for industry. The fairies care for a sustainable planet" (Shapiro). Even in its setting, the film's two spheres are positioned to be diametrically opposed to each other in order to symbolize the perceived binaries of difference, not just of gender but of politics and class, in order for these differences to be eradicated by the film's end when Maleficent and Aurora, female agents originating from both spheres, unite them.

Figures 13 and 14. King Stefan's castle in the masculine-coded kingdom of humans starkly contrasts the feminine Moors of the fairies (*Maleficent*. Walt Disney. 2014.).

The discussion of setting thus far, however, has only concerned the Moors in their original and ultimate states. During the film, they undergo a shift that mirrors the dynamic character arc of Maleficent herself, which is, of course, the plot's primary movement. More than a two-dimensional struggle between kingdoms and the characters they each contain, *Maleficent*, like all fantasies, operates on the psycho-symbolic level as well. In this case, it plays out in externalized settings and characters the internalized navigation of the identities,

roles, performances, and psychosocial politics of gender. Maleficent's character operates on two levels, as the protagonist as well as the center of the individual's psyche, as it deconstructs the binaries of feminine and masculine and adopts performances of both into a unified whole which becomes mirrored by the kingdoms' – both the masculine human realm and the feminine (and possibly queer) Moors – eventual reconciliation.

It is this journey of the psyche and the self from an internalized world to the socio-political plane and back again that reveals *Maleficent*'s embedded progressive ideology of gender. Nearly every aspect of the *mise en scène,* including costuming and props, reflects this. At the film's beginning, Maleficent's character is still a child, relatively innocent and carefree despite losing her parents in an undisclosed tragedy assumed to be due to the standing feud between the realms. The young Maleficent, played by Isobelle Molloy, dons a plain, free-flowing grey dress that resembles angelic robes. However, she also bears horns, which are bestial if not demonic in appearance. These and the prosthetic cheekbones, which remain integral to the costuming and make-up on Jolie, give her an almost masculine aura, which fuses with the feminine-signified features of her bright red lipstick, pale skin, and long hair. Maleficent's most striking feature, however, are the computer-animated wings, which also blend animalistic and angelic elements and allow her to swoop and soar over the Moors in complete freedom and ecstasy. These wings, depicted through alternating close-up and panoramic shots in the opening sequences, become instantly associated with Maleficent's power or agency as they allow her to transcend and to cover the

Moors. Paired with her magic, the wings allow her to live a completely independent and liberated life and also a life unbound by gender roles or gender politics.

This life is interrupted, however, when a child version of Stefan, a young man of the human royal court, sneaks into the Moors out of desperation to steal gems from one of the lakes. Maleficent, as the touted great protector of the Moors, intervenes and accosts him. He surrenders on the terms of her promise for his safety ("Stealing might be wrong, but we don't kill for it") and she escorts him to the barrier between the kingdoms. The metaphor, of course, which is buried in this exchange is that he "steals" her heart instead. The following montage of scenes, accompanied with more of Aurora's voice-over narration, portrays Stefan returning to the Moors to visit Maleficent as the two grow up until, in a mid-shot back-lit with a sunset, the audience sees their near-silhouettes exchanging a "true love's kiss" on her sixteenth birthday (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Maleficent and Stefan exchange "true love's kiss" (*Maleficent*. Walt Disney. 2014.).

Although the narrative seems to be following the typical syntactical subplot of heterosexual romance in fantasy, this is abruptly subverted before the end of the first act. In one of the film's most self-reflexive moves, Stefan, who would have normally taken the role of the hero who might later "save" Maleficent from danger, becomes a villain, prioritizing his own greed and ambition over his

feelings toward her. After a battle sequence in which Maleficent along with a host of CGI fairy beasts successfully drive back a human (and thereby male) invasion of the Moors, the dying human king calls for his subjects to kill Maleficent, the reward being the throne and the king's daughter. Stefan, who has estranged himself from Maleficent for several years, returns to the Moors under the ruse of coming to warn her. Maleficent, at this point portrayed by Jolie, accepts him back cordially and naively. However, that same night Stefan slips her a sleeping potion and, in a scene depicting brutal male violence against women that is arguably on a par with rape, cuts off her wings and leaves her lying in the swamps of the Moors. As Maleficent awakens and becomes aware of her violation and victimization at about eighteen minutes into the film, the audience understands that the old tropes have been disrupted and dismantled. Close shots of Maleficent crying out in pain and horror while reaching for her absent wings, followed by a mid-shot from above of her curled in a fetal position that expands into a long shot with the echoing of her cries in the background, depict a deep and lasting emotional and physical trauma that will turn Maleficent against the patriarchy which wounded her. However, without her wings, she must learn to navigate gender in new ways, to adopt its various signifiers and performances – initially in an attempt to gain revenge but eventually to mete out non-traditional forms of restoration and justice. This begins with a dramatic shift in her character's demeanor and appearance, and, as noted previously, in the appearance of the Moors themselves. Now that Stefan is rewarded with a crown and a wife for his violent acts against Maleficent, she has more than enough reason to turn bitter. With her wings

encased in iron and glass in Stefan's castle, she is essentially handicapped. She transforms a stick lying beside her in the swamps into an iconic – and phallic – staff topped with the crystal ball. She darkens the Moors and creates a throne of thorns for herself, essentially undermining her utopian, egalitarian world in order to mimic the monarchy of the humans. She recruits the servitude of a crow, Diaval, by saving his life from a human farmer and transforming him into a sentient quasi-human, played by actor Sam Riley, through means of magic, to do her will. Diaval becomes her substitute pair of "wings," at first almost an extension of herself but later a free agent and her arguably queer companion. The logic of the film seems to dictate that Maleficent can no longer trust or rely on men who align themselves with normative heterosexual roles and agendas. Dival, whom she rescues from male-inflicted violence, also fits into the class of those oppressed by the male patriarchy, and thereby can serve as an ally in her cause. Once she learns from Diaval that Stefan and his wife are with child, Maleficent seems fixed on female counter-violence toward this patriarchy that has damaged them both.

Figures 16 and 17. Maleficent before her victimization and after her transformation.

When Maleficent arrives to curse the infant Aurora at the baby's end (*Maleficent*. Walt Disney. 2014).

christening, her shift may seem overly dramatic and abrupt, but one must remember that she has had at least nine months to let her bitterness grow. Therefore, it is at the beginning of the second act where Maleficent's character seems to align most closely with the villain from *Sleeping Beauty.* She shows up at the human castle costumed all in black fabric and shiny black leather covering her horns and scalp. The long train of her dress is uneven and bat-like. Staff in hand, she appears as a sort of dominatrix, the dangerous female-Other who threatens to control and punish (see Figures 16 and 17). She laughs maniacally as she forces Stefan into groveling submission before her as he tries to save his daughter from her curse. She uses magic to hurl the three other fairy females present across the room. She is unsympathetic to all she perceives as weak, taking anger on out them for what was done to her. As she curses Aurora in a display of power, one has to wonder how the film will pull Maleficent back from this new, problematic role of the female that punishes the female for the patriarchy's crimes. However, with two acts remaining and a promise that this film will re-make the old story, the audience can hope at this point that Maleficent's journey toward the deconstruction and reconciliation of gender binaries and performances will pan out by the end.

It is not far into the film's second act that Maleficent's character begins to revisit the traits of her old self. As Aurora is raised by the three fairies in the liminal space between the human and magical realms, Maleficent takes it upon herself to rescue the child from her foster-mothers' shortcomings, added to provide comedic relief. She and Diaval hover in and around Aurora's life, despite

Maleficent's opinion of the young girl as a "beastie." Aurora's character – constantly laughing, blond-haired, blue-eyed and costumed nearly always in white and bright pastels – recalls Maleficent's own childhood innocence and sense of wonder. Maleficent, almost unconsciously, begins to adopt the role of the surrogate mother, protecting and meeting the needs of Aurora in a way that no one else can. Jolie's own daughter, in fact, was cast to play a toddler version of Aurora because she was the only child who was not terrified of Jolie's appearance in costume (Breznican). By the time Elle Fanning enters the film as an adolescent Aurora, Maleficent is a fixed presence in Aurora's life. The girl is semi-cognizant of her "fairy godmother" and seeks her out by attempting to penetrate the wall of thorns that Maleficent erected around the Moors, which serve as the ontological rupture between the kingdoms and which only Maleficent and Diaval heretofore have passed between. Maleficent draws her into the Moors, and the two are united face to face in the symbolic realm where each can face the Other, the countering aspects of female gender performance that have eluded them. From this point onward in the film, Maleficent visibly softens in her role of motherhood and Aurora becomes more assertive about her desires. In a moving scene in Aurora's bedroom as she sleeps, Maleficent trikes to revoke her curse in an act of remorse for having taken her revenge on the girl, but she finds her own former resoluteness and power blocking her from changing the course of fate. The logic of the film here not only suggests that the past is not so easily erased but that Maleficent's character must undergo a still-deeper progression on her journey toward gender-reconciliation. It also suggests that Aurora must develop her own

brand of female agency. The mother cannot forever shield the daughter from the ugliness of the patriarchy and its repercussive violence against women, and Aurora must learn to operate independently within that world.

This progression reaches its crux in the climax and then falls swiftly into the resolution where Maleficent, as well as Aurora and the two kingdoms, achieve a state of equilibrium after the breakdown of gender binaries. Aurora returns to her father's castle after she learns the truth of Maleficent's as well as her own past. Incidentally, it is in the armored, vigilant, male-dominated world of her father – who has spiraled into insanity, plagued by guilt for his crimes – that Aurora is most threatened. She unwarily falls victim to Maleficent's original curse because Stefan focuses his energy in attempting to trap and destroy Maleficent, his perceived "femme fatale," rather than trying to protect his daughter. As Aurora is lured toward the spindle and then lies in a death-like sleep after being penetrated by the phallus of the needle in her finger, she reaches the height of her passivity as a character, which has been brought on by misguided actions of both male – her father's – and female – Maleficent's – choices from their respective extremes in gender polarity. Aurora is symbolically trapped between the perceived gender-divide, the world of her father and the world of Maleficent. Therefore, when Maleficent and Diaval essentially drag Phillip to her to attempt true love's kiss, the film's logic, as well as its self-reflexivity in the genre, necessitates that he must fail. Either the love and presence of the father, who has been literally and figuratively absent from Aurora's life, or those of the mother must save her. Hence, when Maleficent tearfully realizes the depth of her regret and kisses

Aurora's forehead, she is also reaching the depth or apex of her journey into gender performance where she must choose to fully adopt the role of the mother which provides "no truer love." It is the non-sexual female bond that brings Aurora fully back to life, and this is what sparks her agency at the climax.

As Stefan's iron trap is sprung for Maleficent and she, even with the aid of Diaval's transformation into a dragon, seems to be doomed to once again be the victim of male brutality, Aurora's rejection of duty to her father and alignment with female solidarity saves her. Aurora topples the case of iron and glass that holds Maleficent's wings, which are portrayed to be fluttering in anticipation to return to her. As they reseal themselves onto Maleficent's back, the camera shows her shifting upright from her position of submission under male oppression and asserting herself on their terms. Her dress is discarded as she is costumed in clothes more practical for the moment: black leather leggings, boots, and a close-fitting shirt. Also gone is the substitute phallus of her staff. Her wings are spread wide as the soundtrack crescendos triumphantly. She has momentarily adopted a more masculine gender performance to actively liberate not only herself, but Diaval and Aurora as well, from the literal and symbolic chains of male oppression. Of course, the final showdown ends with Stefan's demise, but it comes of his own making. By that point, Maleficent has perhaps not forgiven nor forgotten what he has done, but she has chosen not to be the agent of counter-violence.

As binaries are deconstructed and reconciled within her character throughout the film, Maleficent similarly brings down the external wall of thorns

between the kingdoms in one of the final scenes, allowing the feminine and masculine realms to merge seamlessly into one. She returns to the costuming of her original gray dress in the Moors, suggesting that gender coding is only performative. Aurora is made a queen, accepts a leadership role over both kingdoms, and harmony is restored. According to the aged Aurora's voice-over narration at the film's closing, Maleficent helped unite the kingdoms as both a "hero and a villain." Even as that binary is deconstructed throughout the film and the audience sees that motives are far more complicated than pure innocence or evil, so too is the binary of gender deconstructed in terms of identity, expression, and politics. As Matt Zoller Seitz argues in his review, *Maleficent* is a "film of resonant gestures and dream logic, in which ancient and contemporary predicaments jostle against each other: romantic betrayal or sexual assault, and their psychological aftermath; the fundamental differences between male and female minds; the way that patriarchal culture fuses women's sense of self-worth to their bodies; even the tangled maternal impulses that independent single women who never wanted kids might experience when they have to care for a child" ("*Maleficent*"). The film shows us a character who blasts apart the gender binary upon which male hegemonic power depends.

All this said, however, *Maleficent* falls short of exhibiting other forms of inclusiveness that might eliminate other binaries persistent in the genre. There are only a handful of minor characters of color, and only one with a speaking role. Moreover, Diaval, though arguably a queer companion to the heroine, is likewise off center stage, leaving individuals with LGBT identities un-affirmed and

closeted in the genre. However, with other fairy-tale remakes in the works, such 2015's *Cinderella* and *Pan*, one can only wonder if the genre will ever use its wings in an age, when, more than ever, audiences are aching to transcend other binaries and systematic forms of oppression.

Conclusion

The very fact that the genre is symbolic in its mode makes it that much more powerful to influence progressive change as societies and their ways of storytelling advance. For the time being, Hollywood will continue to churn out conservative fantasies, but one can see that the journey toward change has begun. *Snow White and the Huntsman* and *Maleficent* have provided evidence that, at least in regard to gender issues, the industry has come quite a ways since *The Wizard of Oz* and *Star Wars*. Experiencing these more recent films, one can anticipate further changes in the genre, playing off familiar semiotic elements but breaking the constraints of their gender coding on the literal and the symbolic level. In *Maleficent* particularly, maybe we have seen the end of old, uncoupled women as witches and witches as purely villainous. These traditionally powerful females might well begin to be portrayed as heroines and symbols of the socially-powerful deviance from convention and social constraints of gender where stories do not have to end in heterosexual unions.

As with any form of popular entertainment, it is the duty of scholars to uncover implicit agendas and the perpetuation of outdated ideology within the fantasy genre. By disclosing and discussing the facets of this genre within its increasing sphere of political and social influence, one can mark key changes in its ideology as it makes strides toward the deconstruction of individual and social experiences of dominance and oppression, and one can also broaden the scope of criticism on the genre into other possible avenues of change.

One does not need to look far in our culture to see, particularly in younger

audiences and those outside the insulated norm, a thirst for these advances in the narrative industries, including Hollywood. Audiences ache for diverse and inclusive portrayals in all genres and media, so much so that they have created their own narratives to meet this desire and, one could argue, *need* to see themselves reflected in cultural discourse. These new narratives, aided by the rise of the Internet, have taken the form of "fan fiction" and "slash fiction," which Robin Anne Reid, in her article "Thrusts in the Dark: Slashers' Queer Practices," defines as "creative work by fans based on the settings and characters existing in books, visual media, and celebrity culture" (463). This, of course, includes fantasy genre films, which are as widely popular among these subgroups of culture as among other audiences. Ultimately, Reid argues for "considering queerness in opposition to normativity rather than homosexuality in opposition to heterosexuality in order to construct analyses of complex gender practices in the reading and writing of fan fictions" (463), the faintest hints of which we have seen in *Maleficent* and *Stardust*. *Many* of these self-made fan authors, often recognized in virtual communities, are committed to producing narratives, or, rather, alternatively-constructed interpretations of pre-existing narratives, which refuse to ascribe to what Alexander Doty refers to as "dominant culture colonization" (2). In fact, many of these writers are exploring queer dimensions of texts – films included – which for decades might have been "silent on the subject [of homosexuality or queerness] for reasons psychosocial (the closet, homophobia) and/or commercial (potentially higher grosses)" (Doty 3). The film industry, like most media production centers, has long withheld non-normative

narrative representations and portrayals, perhaps to appease a conservative audience that might have been uncomfortable with them. In many regards, the industry, at least in popular genres such as the fantasy genre, is still sticking to the practice of keeping queer elements muted and non-explicit; one has to *find* them rather than receiving them openly. For progressive viewers and critics like Doty, there is a deep frustration and sense of loss from "the persistence and pervasiveness of heterocentric cultural fantasies" (52), and the same frustration could be felt in response to the pervasiveness of white-dominated and male-dominated narratives as well.

Audiences are more than ready and in need of progressive ideological moves to manifest on the screen as they flock to genre films.[3] Knights and Kerfoot's suggestion that we learn to "[occupy] the space between representations and the conditions that make them possible, since this may be a necessary condition for reflecting on the complex relationships between knowledge, power and subjectivity" (446) is an important one. Furthermore, they argue that this "can help us to understand how even a feminist [or queer] discourse intent on challenging masculine [or straight] supremacy can end up reproducing it" (446). Since fantasy narratives exist within the liminal space of the psyche, tapping into the subconscious and potentially portraying our internal identities as external narratives, the fantasy film genre wields tremendous power to influence our sense of self for good or ill. Similarly, since the genre contains utopian potential by

---

3 It should be noted that adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, are a key demographic targeted for fantasy genre films. This audience subgroup also happens to produce the primary creators of fan-fiction and queer or slash fiction stories and videos that have become a sort of sub-genre in themselves, although one as yet without access to the film industry or other mainstream venues.

making supernatural manipulation possible within its diegetic worlds, it has the ability and perhaps the responsibility to draw audiences into spaces where our own reality could be re-imagined and re-invented. Unfortunately, this influence that the industry holds is a double-edged sword which has been unconsciously used with a large and terrible effect to work against progressive ideals rather than to espouse them. Nevertheless, just as these genre films have become, in a way, our culture's medium through which to reflect on gender, sexuality, and identity, so could our culture learn to blast apart binaries of difference that serve to exclude diverse perspectives and further to begin to produce narratives and films that more positively reinforce egalitarian ideologies and politics.

Stephen Donaldson contends of fantasy that "to the extent that...victories are believable in context - to the extent that the [viewers] experience the hero's internal struggle and value the answer [he or she] finds to the void" then fantasy is "relevant" to modern audiences and to "contemporary perceptions of what it means to be human" (16). What film fantasies still lack are various representations of differing human experiences. Shamefully, the relevant issues of race, social class, and the LGBT experience have barely been addressed within the recent boom of high-concept fantasy genre films. These films seem to have developed a bold new position on gender issues, but audiences are still waiting for the day when it is not a princess or a shop-boy who must be the savior, a role that could be filled by individuals hailing from a diverse range of age, race, sex, queer, or class experiences. Moreover, audiences can only anticipate films in which a myriad of heroes and heroines triumph not against witches and their hunt for

beauty but from the dangerous faces of the status quo. For now, the most progressive ideologies seem limited to fan fictions, in which they have become aggressively pervasive but excluded from access to the industry.

I hope that the issues this paper has raised will incite further imagination into what sort of happily-ever-after the fantasy film genre can hold for its audiences. Perhaps these discussions will help to close the gap between the change that a large portion of the culture seems ready to see reflected on screen and what the industry is currently producing. Due to the power and potential that fairy-tales and fantasy hold for audiences, the genre will likely remain a permanent fixture in our cultural imagination. I anticipate with optimism that future fantasy films will continue in the genre's self-reflexive march toward progress. Despite fantasy's sustained pervasiveness and popularity, however, there still seems a disconnect between Hollywood and its consumers. When an industry seems bent on marketing their high concept films, such as those of the fantasy genre, to families and children, perhaps this fosters discouragement from promoting and celebrating all manner of diverse perspectives that imply post-binary possibilities of gender, race, class, and LGBT experiences so as to cause these issues to seem restricted or muted at best within the high-concept films. One could argue queer issues and identities, particularly, still seem off limits. Perhaps inclusiveness and acceptance toward LGBT identities is something too recently embraced as possible within the imaginations of the majority of Americans. Perhaps these changes will not take leaps and bounds within fantasy films but will instead take time to trickle into revisionist versions of the traditional fairy tales

that have been cultural edifices for so long. Furthermore, maybe it is the astronomical production costs alone – and therefore the cost of flopping at the box office – which keeps progressive ideologies in check. One must keep in mind that it was not until fairly recently in the history of film that fantasy has achieved such burgeoning success. We can hope that the genre's continual success and popularity will encourage Hollywood to wield the fantasy film genre in a way that includes and promotes diverse perspectives and experiences rather than that reverts to producing films which inflict the wounds of outdated ideologies. Perhaps, given their increasing access to technology and greater budgets, the filmmakers of the genre will find progressive new ways to navigate its imaginative, liminal spaces. Until then, audiences will continue to participate affirm, embrace, and participate in – even beyond the walls of the cinema – the changes currently gaining ground in the genre, and we can hope that this positive and widespread cultural attention will give the industry greater license to inject the liminal space of fantasy films with new and imaginative, post-binary possibilities in the future.

Works Cited

Altman, Rick. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." *Film Genre Reader III*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. 27-41.

Breznican, Anthony. "Angelina Jolie Q&A: Bringing malevolent '*Maleficent*' to life, doing some good in the world – and those '*50 Shades*' rumors." *EWOnline*. Retrieved 6 June from [http://insidemovies.ew.com/2014/03/14/angelina-jolie-qa-maleficent/utm_source=huffingtonpost. com&utm_medium=referral&utm_ campaign=pubexchange_article].

The Brothers Grimm. Dir. Terry Gilliam. Perf. Matt Damon, Heath Ledger, and Monica Belluci. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2005.

Cahill, Susan. "Through the Looking Glass: Fairy-Tale Cinema and the Spectacle Of Femininity in *Stardust* and *The Brothers Grimm*." *Marvels & Tales*, 24(1). Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010. 57-67.

Davidson, Rjurik. "Telling Tales: The Fantasy in *Stardust*." *Screen Education*, 48. 2007. 2-17.

Donaldson, Stephen. "Epic Fantasy in the Modern World: A Few Observations." *Occasional Papers*, 2(2). Ed. Alex Gildzen. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986.

Doty, Alexander. *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Ehrlich, Matthew C. "Facts, Truth, and Bad Journalists in the Movies." *Journalism*, 7(4). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006. 501-

519.

Fowkes, Katherine. *The Fantasy Film*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Gleiberman, Owen. "*Snow White and the Huntsman*." *EW.com*, 2012. Retrieved 8 December 2012 from http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20609141_ 20587871,00. html.

Haraway, Donna. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in World of Modern Science*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows, Part Two. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, and Joseph Fiennes. Warner Bros., 2011.

Knights, David and Deborah Kerfoot. "Between Representations and Subjectivity: Gender Binaries and the Politics of Organizational Transformation." *Gender, Work and Organization*, 11(4). Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. 430-454.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Ed. Leonardo Quaresima. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perf. Elijah Wood, Sean Astin, Viggo Mortenson, and Ian McKellan. New Line, 2001.

Maleficent. Dir. Robert Stromberg. Perf. Angelina Jolie and Elle Fanning. Walt Disney, 2014.

"Maleficent (2014)." *IMDB*. Retrieved July 20 from [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1587310/].

Monro, Surya. "Beyond Male and Female: Poststructuralism and the Spectrium of Gender." *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 8(1). Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2005. 3-22.

Reid, Robin Anne. "Thrusts in the Dark: Slashers' Queer Practices." *Extrapolation*, (50)3. Brownsville, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009. 463-483.

Schatz, Thomas. "Film Genres and the Genre Film." *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*. Boston: McGraw Hill. 14-41.

Seitz, Matt Zoller. "*Maleficent*." *RogerEbert.com.* 2014.

Shapiro, Jordan. "Why Disney's '*Maleficent*' Matters." *Forbes.com.* 2014.

Shelton, Robert. "The Utopian Film Genre: Putting Shadows on the Silver Screen." *Utopian Studies*, (4)2. Pittsburg: Penn State University Press, 1993. 18-25.

Shrek. Dir. Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson. Per. Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, and John Lithgow. Dreamworks, 2001.

Snow White and the Huntsman. Dir. Rupert Sanders. Perf. Kristen Stewart, Christopher Hemsworth, and Charlize Theron. Universal Pictures, 2012.

Stardust. Dir. Matthew Vaughn. Perf. Claire Danes, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Robert De Niro. Paramount, 2007.

The Wizard of Oz. Dir. Victor Fleming. Perf. Judy Garland, Frank Morgan, and

Ray Bolger. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939.

Wood, Juliette. "Filming Fairies: Popular Film, Audience Response and Meaning in Contemporary Fairy Lore." *Folklore,* 117(3). Taylor & Francis. 279-296.

Wood, Robin. "Ideology, Genre, Auteur." *Film Genre Reader III*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. 60-74.